

Australasian Nature Photography: ANZANG Sixth Collection

edited by South Australian Museum

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What a pleasure it is to peruse the images in this book, to drool over animal behaviour, marvel at animal portraits and thoroughly enjoying all the quality photographs of nature subjects in Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and New Guinea reproduced here.

ANZANG is an annual competition of photographs of nature subjects. In 2009 over 1500 photographers from around the world entered the competition in 10 different categories. This book is a compilation of the best photographs in each category.

The first photo is that of the overall winner. This is where judges considered the photographic technique and the aesthetic, artistic and unique qualities of all images.

Next presented is the portfolio prize awarded to the photographer who entered the best portfolio of six or more entries. The photographs by the portfolio winner are all of marine creatures, both in an out of the water.

Following these are the best photos in the categories of entry, beginning with the winner and runner-up in each section. Details given for each photo include the name of the photographer, a title, a paragraph about how the photographer was able to capture the image, where it was taken and details about the camera, model, lens, aperture, shutter speed and supporting equipment used. For the winner in each category there is a short comment by the judges and including why the photo appealed to them.

The first category is animal behaviour where the subjects must be engaged in natural activity. A complete range of species has been presented from birds, to mammals, to invertebrates (terrestrial and marine), from tiny to big—leafhopper nymphs tended by ants, to Keelbacks devouring Cane Toads, a Willie Wagtail attacking an Osprey, to a Humpback breaching, and more. What an appetiser for the next category of Animal Portrait.

In this section the subject must be photographed close-up and occupy at least 30% of the frame. Considering that the subject of the winning photo in this section is a Red-bellied Black Snake the judges' comment 'A brave shot of a dangerous animal ...' is particularly apt. From this impressive start follow many other great portraits: a squid, various birds, a crab, butterflies, an eyeball photo of a Silvereye, stink bugs on a lime tree, mantids, a reptile and a frog.

The Wilderness Landscape category is a collection of photos in which there is minimal evidence of human interference. There are some wonderful ice sculptures from Antarctica featured here as well as intriguing photos of reflections, time exposure of waterfalls, a sand dune at sunset and a pelican at dawn.

The next category is Threatened Animals and Plants. All entries in this category must be accompanied by an official reference verifying the subject's threatened, rare, vulnerable or endangered status. This section can be of a subject in portrait, natural activity or natural habitat.

Other categories are: Botanical subject, as portrait or habitat shot; Underwater subject (with the jellyfish on the book's cover as the winner in this section); a category for Black and White including images from all categories; Interpretive Photography, which is designed for photographers who wish to experiment graphically with their images; Our Impact with subjects relating to the danger of plastic bags at sea, impact of fences and pollution.

The last category is for Junior Photography for those under 18. Some stunning images have been captured—starfish, frog, echidna and a butterfly on a crocodile's back—many beautiful images, some with a long lens and some close-up.

I read through every paragraph on every photo and was amazed at the lengths to which many of these photographers would go to get their photos. The results speak for themselves.

This is a beautiful book of wonderful images, an inspiration to all the wanabes who own cameras. Essentially a coffee table book, it is much more than that. Many of these images would be

ideal as artwork on a wall, to replace the arty paintings or abstracts that are often seen in built environments.

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